

## REMEMBRANCES OF PROFESSOR JOHANNES LUKAS

I first met Professor Johannes Lukas in 1962 when I was serving in the Peace Corps as a secondary school teacher in Maiduguri. Lukas had come to Nigeria to conduct field research on Bole and was in Maiduguri to handle practical matters and to visit old friends from his Kanuri days.

Before the Peace Corps I had done a Masters degree in anthropology. (My thesis was on Melanesian cargo cults!) As part of my studies, I was required to take classes in linguistics, which I found more to my liking than social/cultural anthropology. So, finding myself in a school where the Nigerian students spoke a multitude of languages, most of which had never been described, I decided to take advantage of the opportunity and undertook a study of Tera, a Chadic language belonging to the Central/Biu-Mandara branch.

I no longer remember how I came to know that Lukas would be in Maiduguri. Since I had no background in African linguistics, most of what I knew about the subject came from informal interactions

that I had had with Carl Hoffmann, Bob Armstrong and the other linguists in Ibadan. In any case, I did go see Lukas, and whereas he could have dismissed me as the uninformed, untrained, intellectually naive American that I was, he greeted me cordially. He encouraged me to carry on with Tera and generously offered to meet me again to provide any help that I might need. Starting with the numbers one, two, three - *da, rap, kunu* - I had already discovered that I had a three-tone language to deal with. However, as someone without proper phonetic training, my main problems related to what struck me as impossibly difficult consonants. So I went to see Lukas a second time, along with my Tera speaker, whereupon Lukas identified the implosive palatal and velar stops and the voiceless and voiced lateral fricatives, patiently helping me to hear and transcribe them. Lukas's input clearly helped because a few years later I succeeded in writing a grammar of Tera for my Ph.D. dissertation.

The second event in which Lukas played a critical role in my professional development had to do with the "Comparative Chadic" paper. While still Ph.D. students, Roxana Ma Newman and I had the temerity to write a long reconstruction/classification paper, which, it is fair to say, came to serve as a focal point and catalyst for Chadic re- search during the ensuing decade. As we later learned, the paper was sent to Lukas for evaluation. In a detailed reply he indicated that al- though he had encouraged me to do descriptive work on Tera, he had not, and would not have, encouraged me to undertake such a comparative study, which he felt was premature given the paucity and in- adequacy of data on individual Chadic languages. He also pointed out a number of specific errors in our data and analysis. Despite these reservations, Lukas concluded that this ambitious paper was an important breakthrough in Chadic and definitely ought to be published.

A decade later when Roxana and I were working in Leiden, we visited Lukas in Hamburg a number of times and enjoyed his and Frau Lukas' warm hospitality. I cherish the memory of these occasions, which inevitably evoke the earlier memory of a skinny young American walking up a dusty path in Maiduguri being welcomed by a neatly dressed German professor, who was the Doyen of Chadic linguistics.

Paul Newman